

(c) The principal importers of Indian granite are USA, Italy, Peoples Republic of China, Chinese Taipei, Germany, Japan and Belgium.

(d) The Export - Import policy of the Government lays down the background for promotion of exports including that for granite, and the granite industry explores the possibilities of finding new markets overseas.

(e) Chinese Taipei (Taiwan) and Japan are two important buyers of Indian Granite, however as per industry reports, slump in construction industry in these countries have affected export of Indian granite to these countries. Export of Indian granite to Taiwan and Japan during 1997-98 and 1998-99 is as under:

| (Quantity in Tonnes) | | (Value in Rs. 000) | | |
|----------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|----------|
| Country | 1997-98 | | 1998-99 | |
| | Qty. | Value | Qty. | Value |
| Chinese Taipei | 95,845 | 10,15,034 | 105,148 | 8,01,047 |
| Japan | 45,705 | 8,79,760 | 33,430 | 6,55,672 |

Book stall contract of M/s. A. H. Wheeler & Co.

2898. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI:

PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 4390, given in the Rajya Sabha on 5th May, 2000 and state:

(a) the details of the past background of the bookstall contract of M/s. A.H. Wheeler & Co. in the context of renewal of the bookstall agreements;

(b) whether the action taken under letter No. 66/TG.II/461 dated 4th February, 1967 regarding tenure period of all the bookstall agreements was in conformity with the provision of Article 19 (1) G of Constitution of India.;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) Prior to 1966, M/s. A.H. Wheeler & Co. had a monopoly in operating bookstalls on entire railway except Southern Railway and part of South Central Railway. The position was reviewed in 1966 and as a consequence of negotiations held with the firm in consultation with the Ministry

of Law, a decision was taken in 1967 that the tenure of licence of M/s. A.H. Wheeler & Co. and M/s. Higginbothams Ltd. would be nine years with effect from 01.01.1967. Tenure of other bookstall licences was fixed as five years. This is in conformity with the provision of article 19(1) (G) of the Constitution of India.

(d) Does not arise.

Stopping of Shatabdi/Swarn shatabdi Trains at Sirhind

2899. SARDAR GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state

(a) whether Government have received any memorandum/representation from some Members of Parliament for the stoppage of Shatabdi/Swarn Shatabdi trains at Sirhind railway station in Punjab;

(b) if so, when the memorandum was received;

(c) whether any decision has since been taken on the request of MPs; and

(d) if not, by when a final decision is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. A joint representation was received from Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra and 3 other Members of Parliament.

(b) It was received on 23.12.1999

(c) Yes, sir. A letter explaining detailed position has already been sent to Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra on 07.02.2000

(d) Does not arise

Digha-Sonpur Rail Line

†2900. SHRI VIJAY SINGH YADAV: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a proposal for Digha- Sonpur rail line in Bihar is pending;

(b) whether any survey for this rail line has been conducted;

(c) if so, by when the work on this line is likely to be initiated; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.